

Epic Tradition and Epigram in Statius

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I. Statius and the Changing Attitudes of Scholarship

No serious Latinist will deny the probability that Statius will again emerge from the current scholarly revaluation of Silver Age Epic as the great poet he seemed to the finest spirits of High Middle Ages and Renaissance, rather than as the pale imitator of Virgil he appeared to the censorious criticism of the nineteenth century, obsessed as it was with its twin heresies of originality and inevitable progress.

A brief examination of BURSIA's 'Jahresbericht' for 1883 (11. Jahrgang, 35. Band), 2. Abteilung: 'Lateinische Klassiker', published in 1885, is most illuminating regarding the Statian Scholarship of the learned world of a century ago. In this volume IWAN MÜLLER printed notices of KARL SCHENKL's note 'De Statii Achilleidis codice Etonensi' (Wiener Studien, IV, 1882, 96–101) and of HAVET's

note on the anomaly between Thetis' *vota* and her behaviour with Chiron in 'Achilleid I' of 1882 (Achilléide I 102 et 145, *Revue de Philologie*, N.S. VI, 1882, 3, 178). In that year epic scholarship concentrated on the fragmentary 'Achilleid' rather than the 'Thebaid', which had perhaps been done to death by recent writings. However, four useful works on the 'Silvae' are here summarised. First, we are referred to papers by RUDOLF BITSCHOFKY and OTTO HIRSCHFELD of 1881 (Zu Statius, *Silvae* I 5, 36ff. resp.: Zu den Silven des Statius, *Wiener Studien*, III, 1881, 159f. resp. 268–276), then to a new edition of the *Epithalamion* (*Silv.* I, 2) by AUGUST HERZOG, issued at Leipzig in 1881, where the editor justifies the now generally accepted form *Violentilla* against TEUFFEL's *Violantilla*, finally to K. ROSSBERG's emendations of 1881 (Zu Statius, *Silven*, *Neue Jahrbücher f. Philologie*, CXXIII, 2, 1881, 143f.). Of more lasting significance was MAXIMILIAN KULLA's Bratislava inaugural lecture of 1881, 'Quaestiones Statianae', which ran to 66 pages. Pages 3–43 contain a summary of the unlisted lines of Statius found referred to in the later poets, especially Ausonius, Claudian and Apollinaris Sidonius. In some cases there are echoes in Martial, also in Juvenal, Nemesianus, Avienus and Ausonius. The list continued through Paulinus of Nola, Claudian, Rutilius Namatianus and Apollinaris Sidonius. However, since KULLA wrote, the scholarship of FRIEDLAENDER has shown that Martial II was at least eight years older than 'Achilleid II' and my own work suggests that it was partly inclusive of much earlier broadsheets written by Martial even before 80 A.D. Unfortunately the examples quoted in comparison with Martial seem all to be obvious commonplaces which neither poet owed to the other. The rest of the study covered Statius' debt to earlier poets. In the same vein was BERNHARD DEIPSER, *De Papinio Statio Vergilii et Ovidii Imitatore* (Argentorati 1881). Here are listed whole categories of words – adjectives, nouns, verbs – which are found in Statius after previous use in Ovid or Virgil. But of greater interest are the tropical or metaphorical collocations which have to be sought from the epic and tragic writers of Hellas like *cava sub nocte*, *ignis edax* and *pallentes hederæ*. The work had a useful appendix by RUDOLF BITSCHOFKY on the similar debt to Statius of later poets, especially Apollinaris.

From the pedantic world of BURSIAIN in 1883 let us turn to the 'Cambridge History of Classical Literature', Part II, of 1982, edited by E. J. KENNEY and W. V. CLAUSEN to cover the whole scope of ancient Latin writings. Here we find in the chapter on Flavian Epic by D. W. T. C. VESSEY an assessment of the state of Scholarship in Statius a hundred years on.¹

"For a long time the Flavian writers were regarded as little better than plagiarists. Recent investigations have revealed the inadequacy and injustice of this approach. This is especially true in Statius' case. His originality has been thoroughly vindicated. All ancient poets were bound by the principle of *imitatio*. This implied not merely respect for the past but a desire to reach

¹ D. W. T. C. VESSEY, Flavian Epic, in: *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Part II (ed. E. J. KENNEY), Cambridge, 1982, pp. 560–561.

new and individual standards of excellence. Statius was rarely, if ever, subservient to those whom he would have named with pride as his models."

Further, it will not do to see him as a facile translator quarrying from the then vast extant mass of Greek literature. As VESSEY remarks,

"For Statius, it was natural to study the Greeks. Statius' Hellenism is not, however, obtrusive. He utilized Euripidean tragedy – the *Phoenissae* and *Suppliant Women* had obvious relevance to the *Thebaid*, and the *Hypsipyle* may have added something to Books 4–8 – but never without radical transformation. From Callimachus he derived, among other things, some details for the myth of Linus and Coroebus (I, 557–672). Apollonius Rhodius played a subsidiary role in the evolution of Hypsipyle's narrative in Book 5. Old theories that he drew material from the Cyclic *Thebaid* or from Antimachus of Colophon may be dismissed as unproven and improbable."²

It will thus be seen that scholarship has turned full circle, and that a right stress on the creative reworking of inherited material is perhaps tending towards too emphatic a denial of some possible influences.

Finally, VESSEY draws very proper attention to the influence of the spirit and culture, the circumstances and politics of an age, in helping to shape the values and attitudes of its poetry. VESSEY observes,

"Commentators have often written of Statius' pessimism . . . Predestination was a central dogma and problem in Stoicism. Free-will and the power of choice were excluded from a structured and interdependent *mundus* . . . To modify any detail or particular in the working of destiny was not only impossible; it would bring about that primal chaos which ever hems in and threatens balance and order. Throughout the *Thebaid* Statius adheres to the twin doctrines of inevitability and cosmic harmony . . . The sins of men infect everything that exists, spreading the taint far and wide . . . The reciprocal sympathy of animate and inanimate nature controls much of the imagery in Statius' Epic."³

Thus the ancient notion of miasma or pollution was made relevant and reasonable to Silver Age Romans by the contemporary physical system of Stoic thought, much as ancient exhortations to moderation and Malthusian economics have suddenly become rational modern and appropriate to contemporary conservationist and ecologist writers. What is at issue here in all the Silver Age writers is an attempt to validate early myth and primitive historic traditions as consonant with a Stoic scientific view of the world.

The scholarship of the later twentieth century is no more perfect than that of a century ago. However, it presents the solid merit of a thorough integration of literature with its cultural background and milieu which helps to enrich our perception of both social conditions and literary achievements.

² VESSEY, op.cit., p. 560.

³ VESSEY, op.cit., pp. 574–576.

II. *An Anti-literary Age*

In many respects the most notable artistic monument of Silver Age Roman civilisation was not the work of Tacitus, Pliny or Statius, of Martial or Juvenal; it was Trajan's Column.⁴ The richly mythological wall painting of Pompeii and Herculaneum with their relative paucity of charred remains of papyrus roll tells the same story.⁵ The triumphs of Roman arms and the traditional mythology of Greece as reworked by Ovid in his 'Metamorphoses' were viewed as themes for the visual arts rather than material for literary recreation. The practical use of literary skill was seen as exemplified in oratory. Though the great Quintilian might extol literary style and show Roman writers as challenging the Greeks in every genre in his tenth book⁶ and to the able well-connected youths in his classroom, most of those young men looked forward to an official career, not to literary leisure.⁷ The Roman Empire of the first century, like the great remote culture of Han China then flourishing at the opposite extremity of Eurasia, was what a modern political scientist would classify as a Frontier garrison apparatus state, where the main industries are army and civil service.⁸ Well might Titus urge the unfortunate Martial to plead cases if he was short of cash.⁹ The other aspect of this glut of willing barristers was of course clients like Flaccus with 'gout in the hand' who declined to pay an unsuccessful advocate.¹⁰ There was a sense in which becoming a poet and becoming a critic of the imperial system on Stoic-Cynic grounds looked like simply two cases of dissent. Nowhere is this better exemplified than by Tacitus himself in the 'Dialogus de Oratoribus'.¹¹

⁴ FILIPPO COARELLI, *Guida archeologica di Roma*, Rome, 1974, pp. 116–127. Especially significant is p. 117: „I rilievi non rivestono tanto un carattere celebrativo ed encomiastico, quanto piuttosto documentario. Si è pensato che si possa trattare di una trascrizione figurativa dei Commentarii di Traiano, narrazione in prosa delle due guerre, certamente ispirati alla simile opera di Cesare.“

⁵ D. RODENWALDT, *Die Composition der Pompejanischen Wandgemälde*, Berlin, 1909; P. SYLVAIN and F. A. DAVID, *Les Antiquités d'Herculaneum*, Vols. I–V, Paris, 1780.

⁶ Quintilian, X, 1, 85–131.

⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola* 4, 3.

⁸ T. F. CARNEY, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity*, Lawrence (Kan.), 1975, Ch. 5. *The Military and Society in Antiquity*.

⁹ Martial, *Epigrams* I, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* I, 98.

¹¹ *Dialogus* 3: *Igitur, ut intravimus cubiculum Materni, sedentem ipsum et, quem pridie recitaverat, librum intra manus habentem, deprehendimus. Tum Secundus: Nilne te, inquit, Materni, fabulae malignorum terrent, qui minus offensas Catonis tui ames? An ideo librum istum adprehendisti, ut diligentius retractares, et sublati, si quae pravam interpretandi materiam dederunt, emitteres Catonem, non quidem meliorem, sed tamen securiorem? Tum ille, Leges tu, quid Maternus sibi debuerit, et agnosces, rem, quae audisti. quod si qua omisit Cato. sequenti recitatione Thyestes dicet. Hanc enim tragoediam disposui jam et intra me ipse formavi. Atque ideo maturare libri hujus editionem festino, ut dimissa priore cura, novae cogitationi toto pectore incumbam.*

Generations of readers have been stirred by Maternus' courageous and charming defence of poetry against the charge of idleness and self-indulgence put forward by his friend Aper the advocate of oratory, legal practice, and public life.¹² But in some ways the long careful account of the decay of oratory given by Messala is even more useful. Bad values assimilated from slaves in infancy are compounded by the immediate recourse of the budding orator in his adolescence to the classroom of the rhetor, a teacher of technicalities of persuasion, rather than to an education in literature and philosophy such as Cicero and Quintilian both advocated.¹³

GOODYEAR dates the work late,¹⁴ but its dependance on Quintilian may have been gained by the youthful Tacitus in the master's classroom rather than by the mature ex-consul's reading of the 'Institutio Oratoria'. In favor of the earlier dating is the obvious yet unrecognised setting of the dialogue. Maternus justifies his plan to write *praetextae* – tragedies of Roman history – and particularly his recent recitation of his Cato – a play of this order, as Tacitus explains.¹⁵

Nam postero die quam Curiatius Maternus Catonem recitauerat, cum offendisse animos potentium diceretur, tamquam in eo tragoediae argumento, sui oblitus, Catonem cogitasset, eaque de re per urbem frequens sermo haberetur, uenerunt ad eum M. Aper et Julius Secundus, celeberrima tum ingenia fori nostri; quos ego in iudiciis non utrosque modo studiose audiebam, sed domi quoque et in publico adsectabar, mira studiorum cupiditate et quodam ardore iuuenili.

Now we know Aper was famous both as orator and courtier under Domitian.¹⁶ What was the nature of this visit to Maternus, who was to be condemned and perish so soon after this notorious recitation? To me the proper commentary on this passage is Agricola 42:

Accessere quidam cogitationum Principis periti, qui, iturusne esset in provinciam, ultro Agricolam interrogarent. ac primo occultis quietem et otium laudare, mox operam suam in adprobanda excusatione offerre; postremo non iam obscuri, suadentes simul terrentesque, pertraxere ad Domitianum.

How did Tacitus know of this interview? He was absent on service at that time in Germany.¹⁷ May it be that he conjectured its content from a similar occasion which he attended, and that Maternus, unlike Agricola, refused to recant his

¹² Dialogus 13: *quod adligati adulatione, nec imperantibus umquam satis servi videntur, nec nobis satis liberi? Quae haec summa eorum potentia est? tantum posse liberti solent. Me vero dulces, ut Virgilius ait, Musae, remotum a sollicitudinibus et curis, et necessitate quotidie aliquid contra animum faciendi, in illa sacra, illosque fontes ferant: nec insanum ultra et lubricum forum famamque pallentem trepidus experiar.*

¹³ Dialogus 28–32.

¹⁴ F. R. D. GOODYEAR, *History and Biography*, in: *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Part II (ed. E. J. KENNEY), Cambridge, 1982, p. 645.

¹⁵ Dialogus 2, 1.

¹⁶ OCD, s.v. Aper.

¹⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola* 45, 4–5.

planned programme and beg the Emperor's mercy for his imprudence? If this is so, the odd conclusion both praising the good order of life under the principate and declaring that political stability is fatal to great oratory becomes intelligible. It is a device to mask the true nature of Maternus' fatal confrontation with the princeps and to turn a refusal to abandon freedom of speech into a literary discussion whose publication may well have been coeval with that of the *Agricola*, whilst its composition may perhaps have been a few years anterior.

Like the nineteenth century, the first century seems to have been a philistine age as much as a prosperous one. The Romanisation of the provinces was a natural result of permanent frontier bases.¹⁸ The need for communication by road directly with Rome or with a Mediterranean port spawned posting stations every twenty miles.¹⁹ Round the stables developed the caravanserais or *mansio* for travellers to stay in relative safety like the Rest Houses of British India. Soon such *canabae* or cantonments became communities of Roman post officials and local natives who could speak some Latin so as to benefit from the passing trade.²⁰ Where the new *oppidum* was at a crossroads the demands of traffic were greater, and frequently, as at Lugdunum, the local tribal leaders abandoned their hill forts for town houses on the plain. Thus the *civitas* ceased to be a tribe as in Caesar's day and became a city.²¹ Further, as Tacitus illustrates,²² able governors like *Agricola* encouraged tribal chiefs to adopt Roman houses and the cult of Roma et Augustus, whilst stimulating the building of forums whose colonnades would become centres of social and commercial activity. Often wider religious syncretism followed, such as the identification of the Celtic goddess of the warm springs at Bath in Britannia with the Roman Minerva.²³ Yet the Latin education of the sons of chieftains did not produce a general zest for Cicero, Horace and Virgil. The result was *eloquentiam concupiscerent*, and Juvenal, well informed about Britain, jests at this trend by remarking

*Gallia cauidicos docuit facunda Britannos:
de conducendo loquitur iam rhetore Thyle.*²⁴

Despite the droughts in Claudius'²⁵ reign and the violence and plundering of the Year of the Four Emperors, the century was an age of growing public and private

¹⁸ E. T. SALMON, *A History of the Roman World, 30 B.C. to A.D. 138*, London, 1944, pp. 253–262.

¹⁹ M. P. CHARLESWORTH, *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire*, New York, 1926, pp. 43–44.

²⁰ R. G. COLLINGWOOD and J. N. L. MYRES, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, Oxford, 1937, pp. 187–188.

²¹ J. S. REID, *Municipalities of the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 1918, Vol. I, p. 181.

²² Tacitus, *Agricola* 21.

²³ R. G. COLLINGWOOD, *op.cit.*, p. 264; cf. J.-L. GIRARD, *La place de Minerve dans la religion romaine au temps du principat*, in: ANRW II, 17,1, ed. by W. HAASE, Berlin–New York 1981, p. 214; E. BIRLEY, *The Deities of Roman Britain*, in: ANRW II, 18,1, ed. by W. HAASE, Berlin–New York 1986, pp. 32 and 54.

²⁴ Juvenal, *Satire* 15, 111–112.

²⁵ Petronius, *Satyricon* 44: *Haec Phileros dixit, illa Ganymedes: „narratis quod nec ad caelum nec ad terram pertinet, cum interim nemo curat quid annona mordet. non meher-*

wealth and comfort. As Petronius shows Italy was a land of hope to provincials and orientals,²⁶ and Juvenal decries the later effects.²⁷ To this prosperous Roman world we may apply St. Paul's phrase "their God is their belly and their glory their shame," adding that their literature was novel and epigram and their conscience popular stoicism.²⁸

As we see from Martial's 'Apophoreta' Virgil was widely read and copies much appreciated as Saturnalia gifts.²⁹ On the other hand the lack of deep interest in Greek letters indicates what MACAULAY felt about the Greek and Latin classical literature which was the sole reading of the great men of the renaissance, and even of such tragic women scholars as Lady JANE GRAY, namely, that after three centuries' growth of modern European literatures, the interest on that cultural capital may be deemed to exceed the principal, and that we gain more from reading Shakespeare than Plautus, Terence and Seneca.³⁰ Certainly Statius complains feelingly and perhaps truly that Manilius Vopiscus is a patron seeking to revive an almost vanished literature.³¹ In the same spirit in our philistine European nineteenth century CHARLES BLOMFIELD the great Aeschylean scholar and subsequent Bishop of London could write to ROSE in 1830 urging him to pursue an academic career with the observation "there are only now but five men in England who care seriously for Aeschylus; you will make a sixth."³²

AS ARNOLD TOYNBEE complained of the men of the Victorian era that they felt they were living in a millenium after the end of History,³³ so the men of the first century A.D. seem to have taken Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' seriously enough

cules hodie buccam panis inuenire potui. et quomodo siccitas perseverat. iam annum esurritio fuit.

²⁶ Ibid. 57: *Ridet? quid habet, quod rideat? numquid pater fetum emit lamna? eques Romanus es: et ego regis filius. „quare ergo seruiniisti?“ quia ipse me dedi in seruitutem et malui ciuis Romanus esse quam tributarius. Et nunc spero me sic uiuere, ut nemini iocus sim.*

²⁷ Juvenal, Satire 3, 61-66:

*iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes
et linguam et mores et cum tibicine chordas
obliquas nec non gentilia tympana secum
uexit et ad circum iussas prostare puellas;
ite, quibus grata est picta lupa barbara mitra.*

²⁸ SIR SAMUEL DILL, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, London, 1905, pp. 287-440.

²⁹ Martial, Epigrams XIV, 136:

*Quam brevis immensum cepit membrana Maronem!
Ipsius uultus prima tabella gerit.*

³⁰ T. B. MACAULAY, Lord Bacon, in: *Essays and Lays of Ancient Rome*, London, 1889, pp. 355-356.

³¹ Statius, *Silvae* I, Praef.: *Manilius certe Vopiscus, uir eruditissimus et qui praecipue uindicat a situ litteras iam paene fugientes, solet ultro quoque nomine meo gloriari, villam Tiburtinam suam descriptam a nobis una die.*

³² J. W. BURGON, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, London, 1891, 'Hugh James Rose, The Restorer of the Old Paths', p. 671.

³³ ARNOLD TOYNBEE, *A Study of History*, Vol. XII, Oxford, 1961, p. 132.

to believe they must be entering a new Golden Age of enlightenment and, in TENNYSON's fine phrase, of "unlaborious earth and oarless sea."³⁴ This was not a favourable intellectual climate for the growth of a new creative literature.

III. Roman Romanticism

It will be evident that, despite the power and antiquity of the literary tradition, both Romans and the newly Romanised stood ready to believe in the dogma of assured progress and to dismiss the old literature of Greece and Republican Rome as boring and irrelevant to modern life. The champions of Classical education had to face similar challenges in the years after Waterloo, particularly in Britain. The great Headmaster of Rugby School Dr. THOMAS ARNOLD is at considerable pains to confute this modernism.³⁵

"From time to time, therefore, as in the *Journal of Education* (vol. vii, p. 240), he raised his voice against the popular outcry by which classical instruction was at that time assailed. And it was perhaps not without a share in producing the subsequent reaction in its favour, that the one headmaster, who from his political connections and opinions would have been supposed most likely to yield to the clamour, was the one who made the most deliberate and decided protest against it . . . He was the first Englishman who drew attention in our public schools to the historical, political and philosophical value of philology and of the ancient writers, as distinguished from the mere verbal criticism and elegant scholarship of the last century."

Again, he stresses the special educational fitness of the ancient tongues.

"The study of language seems to me as if it was given for the very purpose of forming the human mind in youth; and the Greek and Latin languages, in themselves so perfect, and at the same time freed from the insuperable difficulty which must attend any attempt to teach boys philology through the medium of their own spoken language, seem the very instruments by which this is to be effected."

In the Rome of the first century it was above all Quintilian who played the role undertaken by ARNOLD in England some eighteen centuries later, as any careful reader of Books I and X will appreciate quickly.³⁶ But just as ARNOLD's work in the 1820's and thirties was reinforced by other reformers, so the work of cultured rhetoricians like Seneca the Elder earlier in the century and of such grammaticians as Statius' father Papinius, who taught poetry and also wrote it,

³⁴ ALFRED TENNYSON, *To Virgil*, Stanza 5.

³⁵ A. P. STANLEY, *The Life of Thomas Arnold*, D.D. (abridged edition), London, 1900, p. 98. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, especially I, 2-9, and X, 2, 1-28.

helped to foster the revival of poetry, first in the Neronian period, and then under the Flavians.

Lucan in many ways seemed as great a rebel as was SHELLEY in the history of English poetry, his Stoicism as impassioned as the latter's naturalism. Further, Lucan, in his treatment of Cato of Utica, comes close to THOMAS CARLYLE's view of the nature of a hero in 'Heroes and Hero-worship, or the Heroic in History'.³⁷ The European Romantic movement looked to nature to inspire a nobler poetry than formal classicism. In the same way Silver Latinity saw poetry in Stoic terms as having its reality in harmony with nature. With this went a certain exuberance and abundance which the master Quintilian thought essential to the writing of the young and eager, asserting that it was easy to prune and trim excesses but impossible to replace the lack of creativity.³⁸

In France romanticism gave us VICTOR HUGO's enormous epic canvas to depict the national history of France, 'La Légende des Siècles':³⁹ the similar reactive Romanticism of Flavian Rome gave us the enormous 'Bellum Punicum' of Silius Italicus as a great new nationalistic epic retelling the tale once told by Naevius in archaic Saturnian verse.⁴⁰ In a sense Statius combines the reactions of SHELLEY and KEATS to the situation of England, showing in the greater scenes of the Thebaid epic a quality not dissimilar to what we find in the 'Cenci' or in 'Prometheus Unbound' of SHELLEY, whilst the lyrical quality of the 'Silvae' is consonant with much we find in KEATS — no other Roman poet prefigures the wistful tenderness and empathy with nature found in the Odes 'to Autumn' or 'to a Nightingale'.⁴¹ Valerius Flaccus writes a more Roman and less Romantic style of hexameter poetry, but the adventures of his heroes are much more attuned to mediaeval or romantic fiction.⁴²

³⁷ THOMAS CARLYLE, *Heroes and Hero-Worship, or, the Heroic in History*, London, 1840.

³⁸ Quintilian, *op. cit.*, II, 4, 7, : *facile remedium est ubertati, sterilia nullo labore uincuntur*.

³⁹ VICTOR HUGO, *La Légende des Siècles*, 1859. GEORGE SAINTSBURY, *A Short History of French Literature*, Oxford, 1917, pp. 500–501 writes: "a marvellous series of narrative or pictorial poems representing scenes from different epochs of the history of the world. These three volumes together represent his poetical talent at its highest . . . In *La Légende des Siècles* the variety of the music, the majesty of some of the pieces and the pathos of others, the rapid success of brilliant dissolving views, and the complete mastery of language and versification at which the poet arrived, combine to produce an effect not easily paralleled elsewhere."

⁴⁰ VESSEY, *op. cit.*, p. 591. Cf. R. G. TANNER, *The Arval Hymn and Early Latin Verse*, *CQ*, n.s. XI, 2, 1961, pp. 209–238.

⁴¹ GEORGE SAINTSBURY, *A Short History of English Literature*, London, 1908, p. 673: "In particular, Keats showed that curious power of entering into the thought and sentiment of other times, which has been so characteristic of our now closing age, and which distinguishes it from all that came before. He knew, it is certain, no Greek: yet the Ode above referred to (On a Grecian Urn) has been accepted by the severest scholars as probably the most Greek thing in English poetry."

⁴² VESSEY, *op. cit.*, Pp. 583: "When set beside Statius, Valerius is restrained and economical. Occasionally his terseness becomes jejune and effete. He sought Virgilian gravity as an antidote to the excesses of Seneca and Lucan; but, lacking his master's genius, he ran a perpetual risk of anaemia."

These poets were not simply interested in archaising themes: they were fighting an impassioned battle for the survival of classical culture. As SIR SAMUEL DILL observed:

"Even in that age of fertile production and too enthusiastic appreciation, Pliny, like Seneca and Statius, has a feeling that love for the things of the mind was waning. And he deemed it an almost religious duty, as Symmachus and Sidonius did more than three centuries after him, to arouse the flagging interest in letters, and to reward even third-rate effort with exuberant praise. He avows that it is a matter of duty to admire and venerate any performance in a field so difficult as that of letters."⁴³

However an imperfectly analysed element in the situation is the likelihood that we have evidence of two conflicting parties among the champions of the literary tradition. An observant reader of Juvenal, Satire 1, will soon suspect that the criticism is not primarily of recitations but of always being *auditor tantum*: that is his motive for writing. His criticisms are always of Greek titles like a 'Theseid' epic or enormous tragedies of 'Orestes' or 'Telephus'.⁴⁴ He does not stigmatise the huge 'Punica' of Silius Italicus or the *praetextae* of Curiatius Maternus, but tells us social conditions force him to take for model the satirist Lucilius, a Roman author treating Roman themes.⁴⁵ This suggests Juvenal belonged to a school of thought which felt considerable approval for the efforts of Silius and Maternus because they treated Roman themes rather than Greek legends. Of course, it is true that the doctrine of *imitatio veterum* led both schools of Silver Latinity to draw on the masterpieces of Homer for their models,⁴⁶ as well as Virgil. As VESSEY comments,

"Not less than the Augustans, the Flavians drank deep of the fountain of Greek poetry. Valerius' principal source was Apollonius Rhodius, though there was little of the servile in the relationship. From Homer, the 'well-spring of poesis', both Statius and Silius adapted much, introducing not only episodes already reshaped by Virgil but fresh ones as well. Both poets

⁴³ SIR SAMUEL DILL, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164.

⁴⁴ Juvenal, Satire 1, 1-6:

*Semper ego auditor tantum? numquamne reponam
uexatus totiens rauci Theseide Cordi?
impune ergo mihi recitauerit ille togatas,
hic elegos? impune diem consumpserit ingens
Telephus aut, summi plena iam margine libri,
scriptus et in tergo necdum finitus Orestes?*

⁴⁵ Juvenal, Satire 1, 19-171.

⁴⁶ VESSEY, *op. cit.*, p. 561: "All ancient poets were bound by the principle of *imitatio*. This implied not merely respect for the past but a desire to reach new and individual standards of excellence. Statius was rarely, if ever, subservient to those he would have named with pride as his models. Valerius also took pains to create his own interpretation of the Argonautic myth, reassigning to Jason a heroic status which the cynical Apollonius had eroded. Even Silius, the most patently dependent of the three, did not hesitate to modify the events of the Punic War to illuminate a wider philosophical perspective."

for example, have incidents based on Achilles' fight with the River Scamander (*Il.*, 21, 34 ff.): Statius describes Hippomedon's battle with the Ismenus (*Theb.*, 9, 404 ff.), Silius Scipio's conflict with Trebia (*Pun.*, 4, 638 ff.) . . . Silius saw no difficulty in welding Homeric motifs on to the framework of Roman history."⁴⁷

The hypothesis of Hellenising and Romanising literary schools as rivals yet both withstanding their philistine contemporaries explains the lack of mutual reference between the pupils of Quintilian like Pliny and Martial⁴⁸ on the one hand and Statius or the virtually unmentioned Valerius on the other. However, both Pliny and Martial praise the efforts of Silius.⁴⁹ Partisanship may explain the lack of any reference to Martial in Statius' *Silvae* or to Statius in Martial's *Epigrams*. Certainly no literary rancour over plagiarism seems a possible explanation: the instances culled by MAXIMILIAN KULLA are no more than mere poetic commonplaces.⁵⁰ The two poets shared several patrons, and both were attractive personalities in the eyes of contemporaries,⁵¹ but they seem to have been divided socially by the dark stream of *odium philologicum*. This too may well account for the somewhat patronising contrast Juvenal draws between Lucan the poet of *Pharsalus* and Statius the author of the *Thebaid* in Satire 7.⁵² Granted this schism, not unnaturally both schools courted Imperial favour, as we see in Martial's *de Spectaculis* and *Epigrams V* as well as in the first book of Statius' *Silvae*.

Though Statius eschews Roman themes for Epic, the choice of the *Thebaid* introduced a theme of the horror of civil strife in early times which must have drawn a responsive sympathy from many who recalled the year of the four emperors. It would be wrong to press political analogies too hard: but the theme was suited to eliciting the reactions Juvenal recalls at its recitations. In his plot Statius has been accused of being 'episodic', but H. W. GARROD has defended this feature.⁵³ In considering his style, J. H. MOZELEY has some interesting comments:

"Statius in borrowing often adds details to fill out the picture, or elaborates the language: often too he introduces a sentimental touch, i.e. he either attributes feeling to inanimate objects, or looks at the scene from the point of view of some living person: in ix, 90 the sea-resisting rocks 'feel no fear'."⁵⁴

The very proper recent interest in the Stoic influence on Statius' thought should make us realise that the doctrine of cosmic sympathy of all parts of the universe means that natural phenomena will have self-consciousness. But it also means

⁴⁷ VESSEY, *op. cit.*, p. 560.

⁴⁸ On Martial's possible connexion with Quintilian's school, see R. G. TANNER, *Levels of Intent in Martial*, above in this same volume (ANRW II, 32, 4), p. 2633.

⁴⁹ Martial, *Epigrams IV*, 14: Pliny, *Epistle III*, 7.

⁵⁰ BURSIA, 1883 (II), pp. 265–266.

⁵¹ M. S. DIMSDALE, *A History of Latin Literature*, London, 1915, pp. 470–471.

⁵² Juvenal, *Satire 7*, 79–89.

⁵³ J. H. MOZLEY, *Introduction to Loeb Statius with English Translation*, London, 1955, p. xv.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii–xviii.

they have καθήκοντα and κατορθώματα.⁵⁵ Thus by οἰκείωσις to their position, on an exposed coast these rocks will adopt a correct moral choice, thereby rejecting all fear (φόβος), though not necessarily without the eupathy which corresponds to that pathos, namely εὐλάβεια.⁵⁶ On this world view rocks as well as men need to deliberate 'de Officiis'.

Another curious element of Statius' style may also have a philosophical explanation of the same order. Stoic physics laid down κρᾶσις δι' ὅλου as the basis of its system: two bodies could occupy the same space simultaneously.⁵⁷ Thus spirit and matter, life and inertia, intelligence and impassivity coexist in one man or animal. But they also may coexist in one word. This, as much as rhetorical theory, underlies the features DEIPSER noted in 1881.⁵⁸ Thus *malignus* is used of *vadum* and *fauces*, *amarus* of *vox*, *superbus* of *stratum* and *thorus*, whilst *ardens* describes both trumpets and a shield and *intonsus* applies to tree tops and mountain tops. This is not merely pathetic fallacy: οἰκείωσις has given the rational cosmic pneuma latent in instruments or parts the character of the personal tensional field with which they are linked. The common metonymy of *pinus* – *hasta*, *navis* or *fax*; *cornu* – *arcus*; *cornu* – *hasta*; *arundo* – *sagitta*, expresses instances of the view that objects or 'tensional fields' are long-lasting events which have transformations like the raw natural material which we transform into implements.⁵⁹

In short, not merely the plots but also the stylistic features of the epics of Statius are meant to exemplify Stoic doctrine and show thus that old mythology was consonant with his contemporary science and not a mere relic of a dead cultural past.

IV. Problems of 'Achilleid I'

The introduction 1–19 raises the problem of which sense we are to assume for the lines

*te longo necdum fidente paratu
molimur magnusque tibi praeludit Achilles.*

In dealing with Quintus Curtius in the 'Cambridge History of Latin Literature' F. D. R. GOODYEAR observes:

⁵⁵ Stobaeus, Eclogae II, 158 (p. 85 WACHSMUTH).

⁵⁶ Diogenes Laertius, VII, 110 (on πάθος) and 116 (on ἀπάθεια). Cf. S. G. PEMBROKE, *Oikeiōsis*, in: A. A. LONG (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism*, London, 1971, pp. 114–149. Cf. Cicero, *De Finibus*, III, 16ff.

⁵⁷ S. SAMBURY, *Physics of the Stoics*, London, 1959, pp. 11–17. Cf. Simplicius, *Physica* IV, 1, p. 530, 11 (ed. DIELS).

⁵⁸ BURSIA, 1883 (II), pp. 266–268.

⁵⁹ S. SAMBURY, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–88.

"Why this accomplished dilettante chose to write about Alexander we cannot know: perhaps he explained in his preface, if he condescended to write one . . . If our tentative dating (coeval with Seneca) is right, the more general revival of interest in Alexander prompted by Trajan is irrelevant."⁶⁰

However, the crowing of a King for Armenia by Nero must have roused interest in conquering Parthia in some quarters,⁶¹ and the deeds of Vespasian and Titus could well have led men to expect the old emperor to send his son to the conquest of the East. The early death of Titus was a frustration of hopes. Did the Dacian Wars of Domitian lead to expectations of a Parthian campaign such as Trajan later carried out? If so, Achilles was the hero of Alexander whom the latter made much of imitating,⁶² if Domitian was still reticent, hence perhaps *longo necdum fidente paratu* for our poet.

Thetis' fear for her son's life is not matched by any like concern for the innocent sailors of the Trojan fleet, and Neptune refuses to allow her to offend the Fates by this inappropriate act she contemplates — the sinking of the fleet.⁶³ At I, 95 she goes at once to visit Chiron and her son: Statius does not waste time reporting her travels, but the cosmic sympathy which causes the earth to blossom for joy at the coming of the lady of the sea whom Jupiter himself had loved.⁶⁴ Chiron's cave is described in 106–118 in terms contrasting him with the blood-thirsty centaurs of his race: long years have turned the Stoic proficient into a sage in tune with the cosmic mind, and he receives his guest graciously. But in I, 131–140 she acts inappropriately through the pathos of fear and lies to Chiron about a plan to dip the boy again in Styx.⁶⁵ Knowing nothing of the real plan to dress the boy as a girl, he consents. Achilles soon arrives, once Chiron has reported his new strength and wilfulness. After supper she leaves the cave for the shore, where she deliberates on means of concealing him and rejects most places as dangerous — the pathos of fear at work — and elects Scyros. Then she carries Achilles (as tall as herself in 173!) with Chiron escorting her and at once departs in her dolphin-chariot in I, 236.

The scene of awakening on Scyros is of great interest as Thetis plays for sympathy and reassures the boy Chiron will never know if he dresses awhile in female attire. Failure is averted by his catching sight of a fetching Scyrian maiden

⁶⁰ F. R. D. GOODYEAR, *History and Biography*, in: *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* II, E. J. KENNEY (ed.), Cambridge, 1982, p. 642.

⁶¹ E. T. SALMON, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁶² N. G. L. HAMMOND, *A History of Greece to 323 B.C.*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 640–641.

⁶³ Achilleid I, 48–49. On 'inappropriate acts' in the Stoic sense, see Cicero, *De Finibus* III, 20ff.

⁶⁴ Achilleid I, 101–103:

*laetantur montes et conubialia pandunt
antra sinus lateque deae Sperchios abundat
obuius et dulci uestigia circuit unda.*

On sympathy of parts of the Stoic Universe, Sextus, *Adv. Math.* IX, 78 (SVF, II, 1013).

⁶⁵ On inappropriate and appropriate acts in relation to pathos, see Stobaeus, *Eclogae* II, p. 69. 11 (WACHSMUTH), (SVF, III, 86).

and falling madly in love with her during a ritual dance. At 283 the poet has asked the rhetorical question

*Quis deus attonitae fraudes astumque parenti
contulit?*

But here the familiar epic machinery does not really creak. The answer assumed is a Stoic one — *Fatum* or *Providentia*.⁶⁶ In 318–348 she dresses the boy in female attire and puts on him her own necklace and dresses his hair. Statius offers a brilliant analysis of his mind; adventure and embarrassment are present, but the deception just achieves conviction:

*nec luctata diu; superest nam plurimus illi
inuirtute decor, fallitque tuentes
ambiguus tenuique latens discrimine sexus.*
(336–338)

Having tamed the boy with expectation of the pathos of pleasure his mother acts once more with inappropriate falsehood, even *testibus aris*. The king is told that here is Achilles' tomboy sister in need of feminine discipline! The fine simile of the strange dove welcomed to the cote by the resident birds reminds us that any wall-painting of rural scenery and all ancient rural writers recall the significance of the role of the dovecote on every farm in Roman Italy (372–378).⁶⁷

The description of Europe's war preparations show the interval from Homer's world: the preparation suggests the Dacian campaigns of Trajan more than the war of Troy:⁶⁸

*Argos agit turmas, vacuantur pascua ditis
Arcadia, frenat celeres Epiros alumnos,
Phocis et Aoniae iaculis rarescitis umbrae,
murorum tormenta Pylos Messeneque tendunt.*
(419–422)

Altogether one wonders if 440 is a hint of an aborted Eastern project planned by Vespasian and Titus about 77 A.D.

⁶⁶ Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* VII, 2, 3f.: In libro enim περὶ προνοίας quarto εἰμαρμένην esse dicit (Chrysippus) φυσικὴν τινα σύνταξιν τῶν ὅλων ἐξ αἰδίου τῶν ἐτέρων τοῖς ἐτέροις ἐπακολουθούντων καὶ μεταπολλυμένων [μετὰ πολὺ μὲν οὖν vulgo] . . . ἀπαρβαύτου οὔσης τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπιπλοκῆς.

⁶⁷ *qualiter Idaliae uolucres, ubi mollia frangunt
nubila, iam longum caeloque domoque gregatae,
si iunxit pinnas diuersoque hospita tractu
uenit ausis, cunctae primum mirantur et horrent:
mox propius propiusque uolant, atque aere in ipso
paulatim fecere suam, plausuque secundo
circueunt hilares et ad alta cubilia ducunt.*

Cf. SYLVAIN and DAVID, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 32, plate 14.

⁶⁸ FILIPPO COARELLI, op. cit., plates on p. 115.

*Thessalia et geminis incusat fata querellis,
quod senior Peleus nec adhuc maturus Achilles.*

In 459–466 the simile of the hunting net vividly pictures the contemporary capture of game animals for slaughter or use in the arenas of Rome.⁶⁹

The universal demand for Achilles in 466–489 reminds one of the call for the promised leader against Mezentius reported by Diomedes to Aeneas in 'Aeneid VIII', and the speech of Protesilaus in fact rejects Diomedes as a possible leader against Troy just as he is ruled out – then by age – at Pallanteum.⁷⁰ But in addition to echoing Virgil this report of the chiefs in council at Aulis may be designed to reflect a great embarrassment of empire, the esteem of generals like Corbulo in Nero's reign or Agricola more lately under Domitian. Tacitus' comments from his 'Agricola' are perhaps relevant,⁷¹ although Titus' prospects after the Jerusalem victory may well be in the poet's mind. From 514–535 we see a good description of Calchas in the condition common to modern mediums in a spiritualistic trance, and the immediate reaction of Odysseus and Diomedes to seek out Achilles and Agamemnon's endorsement of the project.

Meanwhile the account of the love of Achilles and Deidamia follows in 560–674. Achilles in fact becomes an incarnation of Bacchus in the tale of passion

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*sic curua feras indago latentes
claudit et admotis paulatim cassibus artat.
illae ignem sonitumque paudent diffusaque linquunt
auiam miranturque suum decrescere montem,
donec in angustam ceciderunt undique uallem;
inque uicem stupuere greges sociosque timore
mansuescunt; simul hirtus aper, simul ursa lupusque
cogitur et captos contempsit cerua leones.*

Cf. U. E. PAOLI, *Rome, its People, Life and Customs* (tr. R. D. MACNAGHTEN), London, 1963, pp. 244–246.

⁷⁰ Aeneid VIII, 505–509:

*ipse oratores ad me regnique coronam
cum sceptro misit mandatque insignia Tarchon,
succedam castris Tyrrhenaque regna capessam.
sed mihi tarda gelu saeculisque effeta senectus
invidet imperium, seraeque ad fortia uires.*

Cf. Achilleid I, 499–502:

*cernis ut ignotum cuncti stupeantque fremantque
Aeaciden? sordent uulgo Calydonius heros
et magno genitus Telamone Ajaxque secundus,
nos quoque: sed Mavors et arrepta Troia probabunt.*

See further: on Corbulo, E. T. SALMON, *op. cit.*, p. 192–194; on Agricola, Tacitus, Agricola 39.

⁷¹ Agricola 41, 3–4: *ita cum damna damnis continuarentur atque omnis annus funeribus et cladibus insigniretur, poscebatur ore uulgi dux Agricola, comparantibus cunctis uigorem, constantiam et expertum bellis animum cum inertia et formidine eorum . . . sic Agricola simul suis uirtutibus, simul utiis aliorum in ipsam gloriam praeceptis agebatur.*

in the forest,⁷² and there are implications here for the conquest of India by Alexander, whose model he was, and by implication by Domitian likewise in the near future. Not without relevance here is the elaborate account of Alexander's Bacchic procession through Carmania in Curtius Rufus, IX, 10, 24–29.⁷³ The reference to Jupiter's love for Juno (588–591) may be oblique flattery of Domitian's relationship with his first wife Domitia, whom he divorced and then recalled to favour, as Suetonius related.⁷⁴ This is all the more probable because Domitian had already equated himself with Jupiter by this stage of his government.⁷⁵

The discovery, despite the rage of Thetis, occupies 675–877. The fine simile of two hunting wolves describing the coming to Scyros of Ulysses and Diomedes may also be designed to refer to Domitian's Roman experience. Suetonius tells us in 69 A.D. he was disguised as a priest of Isis and hid in a friend's mother's house.⁷⁶ At 773 the welcoming banquet for the visiting heroes follows and the speech of Ulysses designed to fire Achilles' manhood. The guests have brought instruments of Bacchanalia for the morrow's rites, but Ulysses has concealed weapons among them to arouse Achilles to self-disclosure, which only the efforts of Deidamia had prevented at the banquet.⁷⁷ After the dance of maidens Achilles finally reveals himself when he touches the weapons (852–857). In Ulysses' exhortation we find the touch of Stoic modernity – Gods have become natural

⁷² Especially noteworthy is Achilleis I, 615–618:

*talis, ubi ad Thebas uultumque animumque remisit
Eubius et patrio satiauit pectora luxu,
serta comis mitramque leuat thyrsusque uirentem
arma et hostiles inuisit fortior Indos.*

⁷³ Quintus Curtius, IX, 10, 24–25: *Igitur, ut supra dictum est, aemulatus Patris Liberi non gloriam solum, quam ex illis gentibus deportauerat, sed etiam famam, siue illud triumphus fuit, siue bacchantium lusus, statuit imitari animo super humanum fastigium elato. Vicos per quos iter erat, floribus coronisque sterni iubet, liminibus aedium cretetas uino repletas et alia eximiae magnitudinis uasa disponi, uehicula deinde constrata, ut plures capere milites possent, in tabernaculorum modum ornari, alia candidis uelis, alia ueste pretiosa.*

⁷⁴ Suetonius, Domitianus 3.

⁷⁵ Martial, Epigrams VIII, 39:

*Qui Palatinae caperet conuiuia mensae
ambrosiasque dapes non erat ante locus:
hic haurire decet sacrum, Germanice, nectar
et Ganymedeae pocula mixta manu.
Esse uelis, oro, serus conuiuia Tonantis:
at tu si properas, Iuppiter, ipse ueni.*

Cf. Suetonius, op. cit., 13.

⁷⁶ Suetonius, op. cit., 1.

⁷⁷ Achilleid I, 802–805:

*exisset stratis, ni prouida signo
Deidamia dato cunctas hortata sorores
liquisset mensas ipsum complexa. sed haeret
respiens Ithacum coetuque nouissimus exit.*

forces at Chrysippus' bidding — 869 *tu caeli pelagique nepos*.⁷⁸ Moved by the lamentations of Deidamia who had just born his child he begs the favour and forgiveness of her father Lycomedes and attains this boon with the support of Ulysses (892–920). The Book ends with reconciliation and a night of joyful but fearful wedlock for Deidamia.

Critics who see the 'Achilleid' as the dying effort of a sick and ageing poet are right, but only right in the same sense as those music critics who similarly described Mozart's 'Requiem'.⁷⁹ A less exuberant piece than the 'Thebaid' it may be the completed work might have been, but deeper in all likelihood in its sense of human frailty and of the worth of persistence even before foredoomed adversity.

V. *Libellus and Epigram — the 'Silvae'*

In the prefatory epistles to the books of the 'Silvae' Statius is prone to describe his individual poems for special occasions as works hastily dashed off in the heat of the moment, and to apply to these effusions — mostly about 100 lines long — the title *libelli*.⁸⁰ In another chapter in this work, I have given grounds for regarding the *libellus* as a work written on papyrus *transversa charta*, or across the breadth of the roll, rather than as usual along the length in successive *paginae* or columns of writing mostly twenty or thirty letters wide and about twenty lines deep set out side by side from left to right.⁸¹ On the recto side the papyrus slices ran longitudinally along the roll while on the verso vertical strips were pasted on to gum the sheet securely together.⁸² Thus on the recto the joints between parallel strips functions like the faint line still printed on some writing tablets today. If one re-used the sheet by writing on the *verso* as the Oxyrrhynchus scribe did by writing on the *verso* of the Nome accounts, then the pen tended to

⁷⁸ Diogenes Laertius, VII, 147: Δία μὲν γὰρ φασὶ δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα· Ζῆνα δὲ καλοῦσι παρ' ὅσον τοῦ ζῆν αἰτιός ἐστιν ἢ διὰ τοῦ ζῆν κενώρηκεν. Ἀθηναῖον δὲ κατὰ τὴν εἰς αἰθέρα διάτασιν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ αὐτοῦ. Ἥραν δὲ κατὰ τὴν εἰς ἄερα· καὶ Ἥφαιστον κατὰ τὴν εἰς τὸ τεχνικὸν πῦρ· καὶ Ποσειδάωνα κατὰ τὴν εἰς τὸ ὑγρόν· καὶ Δήμητρα κατὰ τὴν εἰς γῆν· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας προσηγορίας ἐχόμενοι τινος οἰκειότητος ἀπέδοσαν.

⁷⁹ E.g. MOZLEY, op.cit., p. xxviii. Cf. VESSEY, op.cit., p. 580. "In describing Achilles' youth, Statius is often poignant and deft: a lightness pervades the *Achilleid* that is rarely found in the Theban epic. And yet, his powers were waning, the fires growing dim. Death brought the project to a premature end."

⁸⁰ Statius, *Silvae* I, Epistula: *Diu multum dubitavi, Stella, iuuenis optime et in studiis nostris eminentissime, qua parte uoluisti, an hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi uoluptate fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo prodierint, congregatos ipse dimitterem.*

⁸¹ R. G. TANNER, Levels of Intent in Martial, above in this same volume (ANRW II, 32, 4), p. 2667.

⁸² SIR E. MAUNDE THOMPSON, Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography, Oxford, 1912, p. 23.

catch on the vertical fibres.⁸³ But if one cut up a long used roll into shorter sections one could write on its *verso transversa charta*, one's hand guided by the joint seams of the shorter cross strips. Such hastily written words set out on pieces of re-used papyrus, whether for notices or advertisements or short literary drafts were, in my view, *libelli* in the proper sense of the term. Further, with the favourable arrangement of papyrus strips for such use, these 'broadsheets' would be very easy to write quickly.⁸⁴

Now while no one could suggest that the majority of the poems in the 'Silvae' collection might appropriately be classified as epigrams, and though Statius himself attributed the term very sparingly — *in arborem certe tuam, Melior, et psittacum scis a me leues libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos*⁸⁵ — and in this context only among his prefaces, none the less this passage shows he felt some link between *libellus* and *epigramma*. In the first place, the term *libellus* is used in these prefatory epistles to the four complete books of the 'Silvae' only in reference to an individual poem, while the term *liber* is always used of the whole volume dedicated to the recipient of the opening epistle. In fact in the Epistle to Stella *libellos* is applied to describe the whole contents of Book I, while in Book II the poems as a group are referred to in the first sentence of the Epistle to Melior as *opuscula*.⁸⁶ However later in that epistle we have the reference to two '*leues libellos* in the manner of epigram' which were mentioned above. In Book III the Epistle to Pollius begins by referring to the whole volume as *libelli*, and refers to the whole series as 'Silvae', one out of two places where the term is used by the poet himself. Then the second poem to Maecius Celer is described as a *libellus*, as indeed is the final one addressed to the poet's wife, which is also classified in the previous sentence as an *ecloga*.⁸⁷ For Book IV the Epistle to Marcellus serves as an apology for the greater length of the volume as well as an introduction. The first poem is referred to as an *opusculum*, but if one follows VOLLMER's conjecture in filling the lacuna, the word *libellos* would follow *tres*.⁸⁸ Poem 5 is described as a *lyricum cantum* and is in fact in alcaics, while poem 7 is in fact likewise in sapphics, though not similarly categorized as a lyric, merely as a welcome piece for Vibius Maximus' homecoming. Next follows what is described as a *ecloga* to Julius Menecrates congratulating its

⁸³ L. D. REYNOLDS and N. G. WILSON, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 3–4.

⁸⁴ SIR E. MAUNDE THOMPSON, *op. cit.*, p. 46, n. 3.

⁸⁵ Statius, *Silvae* II, Epistula.

⁸⁶ *Et familiaritas nostra qua gaudeo, Melior, uir optime, nec minus in iudicio litterarum quam in omni uitae colore tersissime, et ipsa opusculorum quae tibi trado condicio sic posita est ut totus hic ad te liber meus etiam sine epistula spectet.*

⁸⁷ Statius, *Silvae* III (Preface): *Sequitur libellus, quo splendidissimum et mihi iucundissimum iuuenem, Maecium Celerem, a sacratissimo imperatore missum ad legionem Syriacam, quia sequi non poteram, sic prosecutus sum . . . Summa est egloga, qua mecum secedere Neapolim Claudiam meam exhortor.*

⁸⁸ *sed hic liber tres habet . . .* "Lacuna recognised by Hahn, though none in MSS . . . Vollmer would fill the lacuna thus: (*libellos* in honorem eius. tum demum secuntur eclogae ad amicos: uides igitur te magis honorari non potuisti)se quam quod . . . etc."

recipient on his award of the *ius trium liberorum*. The last piece for Plotius Grypus is referred to as *hendecasyllabos, quos Saturnalibus una risimus*.⁸⁹ Incidentally, this preface includes the only other reference to the name or genre of the collection — *quare ergo plura (opuscula?) in quarto Silvarum quam in prioribus?*⁹⁰

To our poet then it seems his *opuscula* may be called *libelli* unless they are in lyric metres. The description of I, 8 shows that a poem in hendecasyllables may be a *libellus* as much as the hexameter majority, whilst the remarks prefaced to Book II show that the hexameter poems 3 and 4 may be called epigrams because they are *leves*, a term needing definition, as well as remaining *libelli*. Again, the two pieces described as *ecloga* are both in hexameters and one is clearly also designated a *libellus*, namely III, 5. In Book I we are left in no doubt that the *epithalamion* for Stella and Violentilla ranks in the general class of *libelli*, as does the *consolatio* for Claudius Etruscus (III, 3). But in the same class are included also I, 4, the celebration of the recovery of Rutilius Gallicus, and III, 2, the poet's farewell to Maecius Celer departing on military service. Also to be included are the celebrations of Domitian's equestrian statue (I, 1), of the villa of Manilius Vopiscus (I, 3), of the baths of Claudius Etruscus (I, 5), and of Pollius Felix's temple of Hercules (III, 1).

The first thing about these *libelli* is that their themes can all be paralleled from Martial's 'Epigrams'. Martial IV, 13 on the marriage of Pudens and Claudia Peregrina is a mere five elegiac couplets, but its theme parallels Statius' *epithalamion* (I, 2). Again, we may set Martial's 36 lines of hendecasyllables (IV, 64) in honour of the villa of Julius Martialis beside the 110 hexameters Statius wrote about the villa of Manilius Vopsicus (I, 3). Again Martial VII, 47 on the recovery of Licinius Sura offers six elegiac couplets to match the 131 hexameter lines Statius writes for the recovery of Rutilius Gallicus (I, 4). Further the parallel between Martial's lines on Caesar's tree at Corduba (IX, 61) with eleven elegiac couplets and the account Statius gives of the tree of Atedius Melior in 7 hexameters (II, 3) is remarkably close.⁹¹ Again the short hexameter poem of 37 lines on

⁸⁹ Plotio Grypo, maioris gradus iuueni, dignius opusculum reddam, sed interim hendecasyllabos, quos Saturnalibus una risimus, huic uolumini inserui.

⁹⁰ *opuscula* is my own supplement.

⁹¹ E.g. Martial, Epigrams IX, 61, 11–14.

saepe sub hac madidi luserunt arbore Fauni
terrui et tacitam fistula sera domum;
dumque fugit solos nocturnum Pana per agros,
saepe sub hac latuit rustica fronde Dryas.

Cf. Statius, Silvae II, 3, 6–11:

quid Phoebum tam parua rogem? uos dicite causas,
Naides, et faciles, satis est, date carmina Fauni.
nympharum tenerae fugiebant Pana cateruae;
ille quidem it, cunctas tamquam uelit, et tamen unam
in Pholoen. siluis haec fluminibusque sequentis
nunc hirtos gressus, nunc improba cornua uitat.

Melior's parrot's death (II, 4) is an extended and romanticised parody of Catullus 2 and 3, which also give a starting point to Martial I, 7 on Stella's *columba*.⁹²

Perhaps we are now closer to defining a *levis libellus* and indeed *libelli*. The OLD sense 14 of 'light', meaning 'not serious' or 'intended for amusement' is generally assumed: but in view of how closely II, 4 follows Catullus' substance, and the probability that a 'tree poem' by Marsus or Gaetulicus⁹³ would have underlain the very similar basic matter of II, 3 and Martial IX, 61, it seems we should prefer sense 7, 'thin', or 'unsubstantial', as exemplified in Lucretius' phrase *animos animasque levis ut noscere possis* (III, 418). This means that the fine round soul atoms are so tenuous that they give the merest definition of form without any solid substance.⁹⁴ Such a meaning of *levis* seems very appropriate for a poem which puts a borrowed theme into a new shape as one might rework a new setting for a diamond: the poet's own actual contribution is then merely the new setting. So in this sense his poem becomes a *levis libellus* in sense 7, while it is probably also an easy task to write it, thus equally being *levis* in sense 9, 'easy to perform (of tasks, duties)'. Clearly sense 14 is by no stretch of the imagination applicable to these two poems, which are in no way 'funny' nor by any Stoic canon 'inappropriate'.⁹⁵

In defining *libellus* itself I wish to have recourse to another chapter which was contributed to this work on the 'Levels of Intent in Martial'. There the following explanation is offered.⁹⁶

"However, in assessing our date we have to bear in mind the nature of Martial's *libelli*. Of course they are in some sense a metrical convenience to replace *libri* where the latter will not scan, but this is hardly the whole point. Apart from the 'Xenia' and 'Apophoreta' of A.D. 84 or 85 which are distichs of quite different character, the only previous extant book by Martial which antedates Epigram I is the 'Liber Spectaculorum' of A.D. 80 referred to in manuscript as 'Epigrammaton Liber', a work to which LINDSAY in his apparatus actually refers as *hunc libellum*. It is interesting to note that whilst the 838 verses of Epigrams I approximates to the size of a book of Virgil's 'Aeneid', the 'Liber Spectaculorum' contains a mere 218 lines. Does Epigrams I, 1,3-4: *toto notus in orbe Martialis / argutis epigram-*

⁹² Martial, Epigrams I, 7:

*Stellae delictum mei columba
Verona licet audiente dicam,
uicit, Maxime, passerem Catulli.
tanto Stella meus tuo Catullo
quanto passere maior est columba.*

⁹³ Martial, Epigrams I, Preface, 9-12: *Lasciam uerborum ueritatem, id est epigrammaton linguam, excusarem, si meum esset exemplum: sic scribit Catullus, sic Marsus, sic Peto, sic Gaetulicus, sic quicumque perlegitur.*

⁹⁴ J. M. RIST, *Epicurus. An Introduction*, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 74-79.

⁹⁵ Stobaeus, *Ecloga* II, p. 69, 11 (WACHSMUTH), (SVF, III, 86): τὰ δὲ κακὰ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων πάντα βλαβερά καὶ δύσχερστα καὶ ἀσύμφορα καὶ ἀλυσιτελῆ καὶ φαῦλα καὶ ἀπρεπῆ καὶ αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀνοίκεια.

⁹⁶ R. G. TANNER, above in this same volume, p. 2667.

maton libellis refer to popular volumes on a similar scale of about 200 lines each? In the 'Oxford Latin Dictionary' *libellus* has these senses: (1) a volume or small book, (b) a defamatory publication, (2) a register or notebook, (3) a formal communication, list or inventory, (4) a placard or public notice or poster, and (5) the programme of an entertainment. Whilst these are consistent with a metrical alternative to *liber* or to a reference to a small book of 200 lines as well as justifying the sense of 'lampoon', the most happy choice is 'broadsheet' in the eighteenth century sense. Certainly the possibility that plagiarists could recite and claim Martial's work to the extent of which he complains suggests the separate circulation of a great many pieces rather than the occasional issue of a volume from a known bookseller. On the basis of Suetonius it might be argued that what linked inventories, despatches, indictments and posters was being written *transversa charta*, that is, parallel with the edge attached to the wooden roller rather than in parallel with the length of the roll in many successive columns of lines or *paginae*. This may well be the true sense of *libellus*. How many lines were usual in such a document is a separate question."

In pursuit of this final problem, I draw the following further conclusions, basing them on the numbers of lines found in Martial's corpus directed at notorious 'fictitious' character types.⁹⁷

"On this hypothesis a *libellus* of poems about 'Ponticus' or 'Naevolus' which included a few items apart from the stereotype inherited from the tradition would serve as a censure from the poet directed to the unnamed but indentifiable culprit and as a source of amusement to the acquaintances of both. It would also follow that hardly any of the *libelli* so defined would have been re-used in their entirety in the later books of epigrams. Therefore the fact that our 'Ponticus' epigrams add up to 41 lines and our 'Naevolus' pieces to a mere 36 should not lead us to set 40 lines as the norm in length for a transverse-written broadsheet or *libellus* of this kind: they would almost certainly have usually been somewhat longer."

Now given that II, 4 of 37 lines is described by Statius as a *libellus* it is probably not quite true to regard 40 lines as too short for such a broadsheet. Indeed, II, 5 the Tame Lion piece so hastily penned in the Circus, must have been taken by Statius to the Emperor as a single broadsheet a few minutes after the event, though only thirty lines long. So I was probably too tidy and dogmatic in my final judgment of the evidence from Martial.⁹⁸

"In general, then, this survey implies that *libelli* consisted of either about 50 or approximately 100 lines, and that the 'De Spectaculis' was probably a double issue in honour of Titus and the occasion, doubtless earning the poet his honorary tribuneship and the *ius trium liberorum*."

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 2668.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 2669.

In fact five poems in the 'Silvae' out of thirty-one exceed 200 lines, so it seems probable that the maximum length of a *libellus* was not 200 but 300 verses. Interestingly enough the long pieces are consolations and the *epithalamion* for Stella and Violentilla, which runs to 277 lines. The longest lament is for the death of his own father (290 verses), and next the *consolatio* to Abascantus on the death of Priscilla (262 lines). The other two *consolationes*, to Atedius Melior on the death of his boy-favourite Glaucias and to Claudius Etruscus on his father's death, are of interest in that Martial attempts both themes also in epigrams of consolation. Martial matches Statius' 234 hexameters of II, 1 of the 'Silvae' with two Epigrams, the 10 hendecasyllables of VI, 28 and the 4 elegiac couplets of VI, 29, the first apotropaic of grief, the second, protreptic of *memento mori*,⁹⁹ reminding us of the brevity of all outstanding things. Against Statius' 216 hexameters of III, 3 must similarly be set Martial's four elegiac couplets of VII, 40, protreptic of thankful pride in the life of a respected father.

In conclusion, then, the *libellus* is a broadsheet written transversely on the back of a piece of papyrus. In poetic terms, it means a single poem or set of epigrams on the one theme of any extent between thirty and three hundred verses.

VI. The Nature and Aim of the 'Silvae'

Though the themes of the 'Silvae' have a good deal in common with quite a number of Martial's 'Epigrams', a *libellus* in Statius' sense is in no way an *epigramma* except in so far as the author himself suggests, namely in the instances of II, 3 and II, 4. Otherwise, granting that such *opuscula* as we find in the 'Silvae' vary from the length of a single longer *epigramma* of Martial in the case of the two instances above to the size we have deduced for Martial's groups of epigrams on particular themes which he appears also to designate as *libelli*, and that many themes are in common between the two authors, it is not possible or sensible to describe Statius' 'Silvae' as 'epigrammatic' in form or, in general, as satiric in intent.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the choice of the title 'Silvae' by the poet does argue a feature in common with epigram, that such poems are often rapidly written occasional sketches. A passage from Quintilian X makes this point clear.¹⁰¹

Diuersum est eorum uitium, qui primum decurrere per materiam stilo quam uelocissimo uolunt, et sequentes calorem atque impetum ex tempore scribunt: hanc siluam uocant.

Now clearly items in the Epistle to Stella beginning 'Silvae I' give full justification for this understanding of the technical term *silva*, and it is doubtless the main implication of the word in such literary contexts: *libellos qui mihi subito*

⁹⁹ On the distinction of hendecasyllable as apotropaic and elegy as being protreptic, R. G. TANNER, above in this same volume, pp. 2638 ff. and 2646 ff.

¹⁰⁰ R. G. TANNER, *ibid.*, p. 2667 ff.

calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo prodierint, congregatos ipse dimitterem. However, it is very significant that two of the poems are also described as *eclogae*; 3, 5 to his wife Claudia, and 4, 8 congratulating Julius Menecratus on the birth of his third child. This poem has certain parallel features with Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', again hailing the birth of a child and a better age to come; in Virgil's case after an era of civil war, in Statius, after the disaster of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Virgil's famous poem contains 63 hexameters; Statius' piece 62 hexameters. The other *ecloga* extends to 112 hexameters, and contrasts his wife's willingness to wander the world with him in the past with her reluctance in old age to retire with him to Naples. This piece seems set against Virgil's first Eclogue, contrasting Tityrus' happy reprieve from expropriation, safe on his ancestral acres, with Meliboeus' need to roam the world in exile, a poem of 83 hexameter verses. The strongly Virgilian tone of these two acknowledged *eclogae* tempts one to discern a strong secondary implication in our poets' choice of the title *silvae* for this collection, particularly when the first piece in Book I of about 91 A.D., dedicated through the book to his friend and patron Stella, is in fact in praise of the equestrian statue of that perpetual censor and continual consul Domitian.¹⁰² The proper commentary on this choice of title for the whole collection may therefore be Virgil, *ecloga* 4, 1-3:

*Sicelides musae, paulo maiora canamus!
non omnis arbusta iuuant humilesque myricae:
si canimus siluas, silvae sint consule dignae!*¹⁰³

If we take this as a major subsidiary explanation of a title with at least two levels of meaning, then much more in the epistle to Stella is made clear. Our poet has published his emulation of Virgil in the 'Thebaid' without first issuing a collection of minor works as his master and model had done before him, and now begins to issue in haste some collected volumes of earlier *libelli* combined with new works as an amends for his apparent *hubris*. In essence *eclogae* like the 'Bucolics' of Virgil, they are to be issued in four books like the master's 'Georgics'. Again, as *hubris* is punished by the gods, there are gods to be placated. Of old one might have said *a Ioue principium*: in Statius' age of blatant adulation, where Martial constantly equates the *princeps* with Jupiter to the latter's disadvantage,¹⁰⁴ the adage must be adapted to read *a Domitiano principium*: hence the praise of Caesar, as the poet makes clear himself.

Though we accept such a further Virgilian model for these poems, it does not follow that Virgil was the sole source of the themes for such hexameter verse. Indeed, the inspiration of *Silvae* I, 1 and IV, 3 seems to be the 'Praises of Ptolemy' by Theocritus, Idyll 17. But of more lively concern is the model for one of the

¹⁰¹ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* X, 3, 17.

¹⁰² SIR J. E. SANDYS and S. G. CAMPBELL, *Latin Epigraphy. An Introduction to the Study of Latin Inscriptions*, Cambridge, 1927, pp. 240-241.

¹⁰³ J. H. BISHOP, *The Silvae of Statius*, in: *For Service to Classical Studies* (ed. M. N. KELLY), Melbourne, 1966, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Martial, *Epigrams* V, 7, 8 and 9.

longest *libelli*, the *epithalamion* for Stella and Violentilla. Now modern scholarship has done much to show how adeptly Statius used the rhetorical classification of poetic genres by the critics of his day,¹⁰⁵ but this is not the issue before us. Let us recall that Martial in Epigrams I, 7 praises the *columba* of Stella as a book to rival the *passer* of Catullus, both books being identified after ancient custom by the first word of the first poem. If this is so, does Statius pay him a delicate tribute by writing in honour of his patron's wedding in that author's own Catullan manner? Granting that the so-called *epyllion* of Catullus ran to 401 lines against the 277 hexameters of Statius' poem, many links of subtle allusion suggest it as the model in mind. The mention of Theseus' desertion of Ariadne with the suggestion that Bacchus would have preferred Violentilla if she had been on Naxos too (131–13) is not merely a reference,¹⁰⁶ but perhaps a rebuke to Catullus for his protracted treatment of the theme in 53–265. Again in 215–217 there is reference to the arrival of Thetis to wed Peleus, for these three verses summarize Catullus, vv. 25–35.¹⁰⁷

*Thessala nec talem uiderunt Pelea Tempe,
cum Thetin Haemoniis Chiron accedere terris
erecto prospexit equo.*

Again, the song of the Fates as the *epithalamion* proper in Catullus 64, 324–376 receives a clear mention in vv. 24–26, echoing the emphasis on white wool,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ VESSEY, *op. cit.*, pp. 564–572.

¹⁰⁶ Statius, *Silvae* I, 2, 130–133:

*hanc si Thessalicos uidisses, Phoebe, per agros,
erraret securo Daphne. si in litore Naxi
Theseum iuxta foret haec conspecta cubile,
Gnosida desertam profugus liquisset et Euban.*

¹⁰⁷ Catullus, 64, 25–34:

*teque adeo eximie taedis felicibus aucte,
Thessaliae columen Pelen, cui Iuppiter ipse,
ipse suos diuum genitor concessit amores.
tene Thetis tenuit pulcerrima Neptunine?
tene suam Tethys concessit ducere neptem,
Oceanusque, mari totum qui amplectitur orbem?
quae simul optato finitae tempore luces
aduenere, domum conuentu tota frequentat
Thessalia, oppletur laetanti regia coetu:
dona ferunt prae se, declarant gaudia uultu.*

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Catullus, 64, 311–319:

*laeua colum molli lana retinebat amictum,
dextera tum leuiter deducens fila supinis
formabat digitis, tum prono in pollice torquens
libratum tereti uersabat turbine fusum,
atque ita decerpens aequabat semper opus dens,
laneaque aridulis haerebat morsa labellis,
quae prius in leui fuerant exstantia filo;
ante pedes autem candentis mollia lanae
uellera uirgati custodibant calathisci.*

*Ergo dies aderat Parcarum conditus albo
vellere, quo Stellae Violentillaeque professus
clamaretur hymen.*

Finally the thronging senators arriving at the wedding (219–240) seem designed to echo the thronging divine guests in Catullus (268–303) though in Stella's case Apollo approves the match, unlike Peleus' unlucky union.

As we are told that Statius had first produced these 'three hundred' lines in two days at Stella's behest, it is clear that the present publication of the text discussed thus in the prefatory epistle was later. I venture to add that it was revised for the new occasion. The lines given Venus to reassure Violentilla, are like many of her utterances to her son in the 'Aeneid',¹⁰⁹ meant to be prophetic (178–181):

*iamque parens Latius, cuius praenosceret mentem
fas mihi, purpureos habitus iuuenique curule
indulgebit ebur Dacasque — haec gloria maior —
exuvias laurosque dabit celebrare recentes.*

Let us grant that, as suggested in the previous line by Statius, Stella was already on his wedding day a *quindecimvir*:¹¹⁰ at the date of publication of 'Silvae I' he is *curulis aedilis* and has celebrated Domitian's victory with games at his own expense. Despite the text, the OCD seems right to believe this event was not the Emperor's Dacian triumph of 89 A.D. but the celebration of his Sarmatian victory in 92 A.D.¹¹¹ If so, we have a *terminus post quem* for the publication of Silvae I, and these lines were added at that time.

VII. Conclusion

The apparent use of a Catullan model here must raise a final issue. Catullan manuscripts often label poem 64 as 'Argonautia'. Was it in fact designed as part of a learned epic like his friend Cinna's 'Zmyrna' (Cat. 95)? If so, despite the fact that Peleus was a noted Argonaut, is not the birth of Achilles a more important and appropriate theme to develop from the 400 hexameter beginning we should then deem this poem to be? HUGH MACNAGHTEN wrote in his text and translation into English verse

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Aeneid I, 314–401.

¹¹⁰ Silvae I, 2, 176–177:

*certe iam nunc Cybeleia mouit
limina et Euboicae carmen legit ille Sibyllae.*

¹¹¹ OCD¹ s.v. Domitian, p. 295 (R. L. JAMES); s.v. Arruntius, Stella, p. 101.

*"This poem, originally intended for an Achilleid, closes rather than concludes, soon after the Fates have sung the marriage song of Peleus and Thetis."*¹¹²

The victories of Domitian in the Balkans were not merely occasions for Statius and Stella to exhibit their poetic or financial loyalties. Granting the long-expected drive towards Parthia in Alexander's footsteps, the campaigns in Dacia and against the Sarmatians of Hungary must have seemed analogues to Alexander's Balkan victories of 336 B.C. which proved the prelude to his Eastern adventure. Again, Achilles was the great conqueror's model and inspiration, so Achilles would also inspire the new Roman conqueror-elect of the Orient, Domitianus Caesar. Did Stella perhaps suggest the theme of an 'Achilleid' to Statius at the time when he was paying for Domitians' Sarmatian celebrations? So perhaps we have a further motive for Statius' recourse to this Catullan model in *Silvae* I, 2, which is more in harmony with the tone of *Silvae* I, 1 than might at first seem to be the case.

Even if this could not be plausibly established, the 'Silvae' were published in the interlude between two epic compositions. Volume I is not much later than the appearance of the finished 'Thebaid', and is generally dated to 91 A.D. As VESSEY makes clear,¹¹³ only Books I-IV were issued by the poet; if I am correct, in emulation of the four 'Georgics', and Book V was put together posthumously from poems he felt unsuited to the recent series. The fragment we have of the 'Achilleid' was in all likelihood begun before the poet's breakdown in 94 A.D. Whether *Silvae* I, 2 really shows us intimate links between his epics and his occasional writings or not, there seems serious reason to find a strongly Virgilian inspiration in the 'Silvae' as much as in the two epic poems.

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¹¹² HUGH MACNAGHTEN, *The Poems of Catullus done into English Verse*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 85; cf. R. ELLIS, *A Commentary on Catullus*, Oxford, 1876, p. 229.

¹¹³ VESSEY, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

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6. Recent Work

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- ALEX HARDIE, *Statius, the Silvae, Poets, Patronage and Epideictic in the Greek and Roman World*, Liverpool, 1982.

This work puts Statius in the context of his Greek heritage and of current literary and rhetorical theory, and must be taken seriously by future exegetes of the 'Silvae'.